

AARP Wisconsin: Appoints Whitefish Bay woman as its next state president

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MADISON, WI – AARP Wisconsin today announces the appointment of Leslie Spencer-Herrera of Whitefish Bay to the two-year position of State President – the highest state-level volunteer position within the nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that has more than 800,000 members statewide and nearly 38 million members nationwide.

Spencer-Herrera, 69, who was appointed to the position by AARP Wisconsin State Director Martha Cranley, will begin her role immediately.

“Leslie truly embodies everything AARP is striving to achieve,” Cranley said. “She understands the importance of empowering Wisconsinites of all ages, cultural backgrounds, and income levels to live their best possible lives. Her experience and expertise in helping those who are less fortunate to gain access to the education and resources they need to succeed are unparalleled. She is a recognized leader in this area and has a strong belief in the work AARP is engaged in to make life better for all of us as we age.”

As AARP Wisconsin State President, Spencer-Herrera will work with AARP members, volunteers, staff, legislators, and state residents on key issues facing the 50-plus population and all Wisconsinites, such as strengthening health care, long-term care, financial security, voter education, and addressing digital needs.

She comes to this role with a great appreciation for all Wisconsin has to offer. She will also help guide AARP's efforts to work with Wisconsin communities that want to become more livable for all their residents by improving services such as transportation options, affordable housing, pedestrian walkways, and bike paths.

"I am so honored to have been appointed to this important position," she said. "I have seen how AARP succeeds at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of life for those over 50. I have two goals. First, to help AARP to better hear and learn the hopes and needs of all Wisconsinites over 50 from Superior to Milwaukee and everywhere in between. And second, to recruit more volunteers from all our communities to make AARP more effective in meeting these hopes and needs."

Spencer-Herrera's career, education, and volunteer activities have revolved around analyzing issues, developing plans, and helping organizations (both in the non-profit and for-profit sectors) to provide services to improve workforce and financial capacity of low-income individuals and families. Her professional life centered on developing training programs which helped individuals access jobs and more skilled positions.

This passion of assuring that people have access to education and training came from having been born in Mexico, immigrating to the U.S., and seeing that the path to success for those in poverty is providing access to skills, credentials, and resources to have the best-paying job possible. She has a deep internal knowledge of what it means to live on the barest of income.

Leslie said she has experienced the strengths and difficulties of aging in the U.S. She worked on a project regarding Home Health Aides, who are often women of color serving their relatives and neighbors with little support, training or pay. She said Medicaid coverage and reimbursement is also a huge problem for Wisconsin residents.

Technology is also a big issue for some Wisconsinites, which is why Leslie is committed to narrowing the digital divide by improving access, training and affordability of computers and hand-held devices.

Having immigrated from Mexico at the age of nine, Spencer-Herrera said she saw the ability to open doors through education. She has a Master's Degree in Political Science from UW-Madison and another Master's in Curriculum &

Instruction with a focus on Adult Education from UW-Milwaukee. She has an undergraduate degree from Indiana University.

Spencer-Herrera has served two years on AARP Wisconsin's Executive Council and is a long-standing AARP member. As State President she said she will strive to help those age 50 and over by bringing both a voice and data to issues of workforce, health care, and digital access particularly for those who live in poverty and/or for whom English is not their first language.

"Leslie is committed to being a strong and capable voice for carrying out AARP's mission here in Wisconsin, which is to make life better for all of us," Cranley said. "We are thrilled and honored to have Leslie leading our statewide efforts."